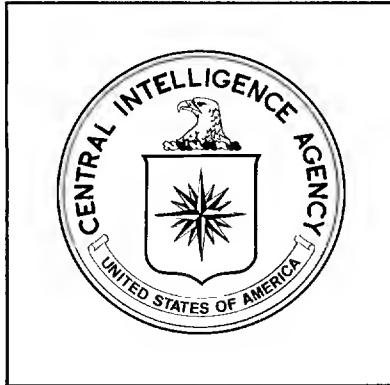


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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Mauritania

Party Congress Convened

Mauritania's only political party, the Party of the Mauritanian People (PPM), convened Friday in ordinary session for the first time since 1970. Although the congress is normally held every four years, it has been postponed three times by President Moktar Ould Daddah because of the party leadership's inability to reorganize and reinvigorate the local units to ensure support of government programs. Ould Daddah is Secretary General of the party.

Most of the discussion during the current session, which is expected to end on August 19, will probably center on Ould Daddah's proposed guidelines for Mauritania's future development. These guidelines, which are expected to win approval, call for more centralized party control and implementation of the Mauritanian variant of socialism.

Ould Daddah's last effort to stimulate the party occurred during an extraordinary session in 1971 when he decided to broaden the party's base by absorbing the country's labor movement and youth program. This action resulted in the party's ranks being swelled with younger, better educated and more ideologically motivated Mauritaniaans who soon began vying for control of local party posts held by the traditional tribal and religious leaders.

To channel the energies of the younger and better educated party members, a new organ of the PPM, the Regional Center for Education and Administration was established in June of this year. The Center also was designed to serve as a vehicle for political mass education and its members have taken a strong interest in formulating an explicit Mauritanian political ideology. Thus far, they have strongly rejected capitalism and Marxism, touted egalitarianism, and argued for the development of Mauritania and its society to be based on Islam.

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President Ould Daddah's address to the opening session of the party congress appeared to support the arguments being propagated by those in charge of the Center. Ould Daddah stated that Mauritanian democracy must be adapted to the social and cultural realities of the country which he characterized as "Islamic, natural, centralist, and socialist." According to Ould Daddah, a "centralist" Mauritanian democracy requires the strengthening of the party and greater integration of women's and youth movements as well as the country's sole labor union. Individual rights are to be protected but not to the point where national unity and development are jeopardized.

On the issue of socialism, the President outlined the principles that he feels should govern Mauritanian democracy: nationalization of key sectors of the economy, the existence of a private sector, the elimination of "exploitation of man by man," and the systematization of punishment and reward. In effect, the President has called for an end to the feudal system that is prevalent in many parts of Mauritania.

Ould Daddah will probably announce a number of ministerial changes during the conference in an effort to gain the backing of the members of the Regional Center and to help ensure adoption and implementation of his program. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Sri Lanka

Quarrel Between Government Parties

A feud between Prime Minister Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and its principal coalition partner, the leftist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), appears more serious than previous conflicts between the two groups. If the dispute is not resolved, the LSSP could be forced out of the government. This could lead to unrest in urban areas, where the leftist party's labor union support is concentrated.

The two parties are quarreling over arrangements for managing tea plantations the government has long been planning to nationalize. Bandaranaike's party does not want to put the plantations in the hands of the LSSP-controlled ministry of plantation industries, since this would give the leftist party new opportunities for placing people in managerial and clerical jobs and for expanding the party's political base into agricultural areas. Instead, the Prime Minister's party proposes to give responsibility for the plantations to the ministry of agriculture, which her party controls. The LSSP appears particularly unhappy over SLFP plans for allowing the plantations to remain under the day-to-day supervision of their current managers from the private sector.

Leaders of the LSSP have threatened to pull the party out of the government if the issue is not resolved to their satisfaction. Bandaranaike, in reply, has issued a strong statement demanding assurances from the leftist party that it will stop criticizing her policies. Many observers believe the LSSP will back down; the party presumably does not want to lose the influence and patronage it has accumulated as a member of the governing coalition. There are reports, however, that Bandaranaike, who may have grown tired of

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wrangling with the LSSP, has decided to force the party out. The third and smallest party in the coalition, the Moscow-oriented Communist Party, is trying to mediate the dispute but has had little success.

The SLFP and the LSSP have quarreled before, but their coalition arrangement has remained intact since Bandaranaike came to power in 1970. Should the LSSP depart from the government, Bandaranaike's party, a mix of moderates and leftists, could stay in power either by itself, in coalition with the communists, or in a new coalition with the right-of-center United National Party, the country's largest opposition party. Under any of these arrangements, Bandaranaike would not change Sri Lanka's nonaligned foreign policy and probably would not abandon its socialist and welfare-oriented domestic policies.
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